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CONFIDENTIAL

13 May 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR: DDI
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Information Systems Board Members

FROM : Executive Director

SUBJECT : Agency Information Technology Standards

1. We have made some important information technology decisions over the past year and committed ourselves to a new plan of action that will enable us to upgrade our systems:

- We have resolved to stop depending on costly "home-grown" solutions for our information technology needs. We intend instead to rely on solutions that have won general acceptance throughout the communications and data processing industry. The decision to move into the IBM 3270-compatible world is an important example.

- We have embraced the concept of "cooperative processing" in order to put more computer power on the desk and end our total dependence on the sometimes fickle mainframe systems. We have decided to phase out Delta Data terminals and a bevy of word processors in favor of personal computers.

- A new Headquarters communications system is underway. It will enhance the capabilities of the new workstations and will guarantee us sufficient future capacity for the inevitable growth in our communications requirements.

- We have adopted a strategy that will allow us to bridge the gap between the old system's architecture and the new technology with a mimimum loss of function. The IBM 3270 PC/AT will be the Agency's standard workstation until mid-1987, when OIT will have completed development of the software necessary to permit the use of AT-compatible workstations. By September 1987, customers will be able to choose from a family of compatible PC's to meet their needs.

- OIT customers have taken on a new role in advising and participating in our information technology decisions. OIT has re-organized to support them better. A PC Center that will supply hardware and software is planned.

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- A Customer Standards Group has been formed by OIT and is working to establish the technical, architectural and service standards we will adhere to as we build our new networks.

2. Short-term, our progress may be slowed by budget constraints and the need to devote considerable energy to the logistics of physically moving many of our people over the next eighteen months. But our long-range direction is very clear. We intend to benefit from the productivity and quality improvements that modern information technology offers and, at the same time, position ourselves to be able to incorporate future technological breakthroughs reasonably smoothly into our systems. By moving toward industry-standard hardware, software and architectures wherever possible, we hope to promote the maximum sensible compatibility in our systems and ease costs, as well as our installation, training and maintenance burden. Specifically, we seek to avoid the continuing expense of force-fitting basically incompatible technologies together in our informations systems. While moving forward on these fronts, we will also give more systematic attention to the security implications of our evolving system, particularly the use of personal computers with their attendant local storage.

3. Additional steps need to be taken in order to support the decisions we have made. Customers need to know what standards will be supported in the future so they can make plans and budget for the retro-fitting of old systems and the development of new ones. I have asked:

- that OIT, with the advice of the Customer Standards Group, promulgate by 1 October the first set of communications, interface, and service standards for the Agency. The group will also set meaningful deadlines for compliance by all Agency systems that require connectivity to central data processing and communications facilities. OIT will be responsible for ensuring wide distribution of information about these standards and the implications of these decisions.

- that OIT, with the advice of the Customer Standards Group, aggressively explore the implications of moving toward a distributed processing architecture. While this architecture is evolving, it is important that the networking of workstations be compatible with the central data processing and communications services. To promote such compatibility, the Customer Standards Group should, by 1 December 1986, identify the workstation networking options possible, and publish and give wide distribution to a set of guidelines designed to help managers make sensible decisions.

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- that OIT, with the advice of the Customer Standards Group, after outlining the implications and consulting widely with those involved, will announce the deadline after which the Agency will no longer procure stand-alone word processing or computer equipment for the Washington area which does not meet Agency standards. Again, information about this decision, the basis for it, and its implications will be widely distributed. Exceptions to these procurement rules will be determined by OIT, with the advice of the Customer Standards Group, on the basis of the need for connectivity to Agency systems or security requirements which require stand-alone facilities.

- The Information Systems Board will monitor the progress of these efforts. Appeals to the decisions on standards and deadlines can be made to the Director of OIT, who, with the advice of the Customer Standards Group, can grant exceptions as warranted.

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